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The Blue-Eyed Monster

Running down the dark corridor, you hear footsteps pounding behind you. You twist down one hallway then cut back through another but you can’t lose the footsteps behind you getting closer and closer. At the end of the hallway you run into a room and lock the door behind you. You find the light switch and turn it on, only to see the blue-eyed monster found you. His eyes as blue as the homepages of Facebook and Twitter and he looms over you waiting to see what you are going to do next. The blue-eyed monster is everywhere. Checking your statuses and your latest tweets, making sure you stay on top of your game in the world of social media. You can’t run and you can’t hide from the blue-eyed monster.

This monster has become more relevant in the last decade; growing with each click of the mouse and key hit. His blue eyes searching for his next victim. With the up rise in technology there have been many changes to daily life. Some of these changes have made daily tasks easier and others have changed how we do tasks completely. One thing that technology has brought about is the use and growing field of social media. Social media has become a standard to today’s population. More and more people join and use social media sites everyday and each of these people have their own reasons for using social media but the most common is to keep in contact with friends and family. Even though this is the most common use for social media there are still other uses for social media and not all of them are as innocent. Social media, as good as it may be at times, should be carefully monitored and used sparingly in the younger population. Children ages 10-15 are too immature to have complete access to the ever growing field of social media. As of now we do not have the time or knowledge to know the potential long term effects of using social media at a young age and the impact of social media should be seriously considered for these individuals.

The age of technology is something that everyone has to learn. For those who are starting to use technology in their 30s, 40s or beyond, learning how to use technology, the internet and social media may be hard to do because they have done things differently their whole lives. For those who were born into this age of technology it is much easier to figure it out. These individuals have not known another way of doing things, they were born into the world of iPads and smartphones and they can figure out how to use them a lot easier than adults relearning how to do things. With this being said there are still dangers of these younger individuals knowing so much when their parents are still learning. Social media is an ever growing field and the younger population is pushing that forward. Social media has become such a standard that if you don’t have one, you could be disconnected from your friends and miss out on events. In 2005 less than 25% of online adults were using social media sites (Social). Over the next 9 years that percentage has shot up. In 2014 74% of online adults were using social media sites (Social). This upward trend shows how in such a short time social media has become a bigger part of daily life.

Rising higher and higher social media is taking over in some aspects of daily life. “Sherry Turkle, a professor at MIT, claims that social media is a metaphor for real life” (Serra). People are becoming so involved in making sure that their online profile is up to date and has every little detail about their life that the individual deems important, that people are starting to neglect their real lives. Putting all this seemingly important information about yourself on social media can have consequences that we don’t always see right in front of us. This information could have consequences reaching identity theft and stalking (Ta). Another very important fact that especially the younger population doesn’t think about is that now employers are searching applicant’s social media sites. Depending on what is on those sites, the chances of getting that job could decrease before you are even interviewed (Ta). People are becoming so obsessed with creating a desirable online account that they are hurting themselves in the real world.

Social media sites are not only affecting those trying to get jobs, but also those just looking to fit in. Pre-teens and teenagers are using social media sites to gain popularity with their peers. “Too often we think of our online profiles as a very serious extension of who we are” (Miller). People, especially pre-teen and teenagers, use their Facebooks and Twitters as ways of communicating instead of the actually talking. These sites are used to determine popularity so these kids post whatever they think other kids will think is cool but they could be harming themselves in the process. This age group is too immature to have total access to social media and have that be their means of determining popularity. These kids are paying more attention to their online world and how many followers they have and how many likes that last post got, that they are losing sight of the real world. They are not paying attention to how they should be interacting with real people in front of them; instead they want to interact with real people through sites that are so popular, they are just an insignificant number in the big picture. This is no where near how these kids are seeing this however. They see this as their life, in fact Jessica Serra makes a point of saying in her article "I refer to our phones, a device that can play many different types of media, as “our entire life” is a bit ludicrous." These devices and the sites that go on them in convenient little apps are taking over lives. This is not something that we should expose pre-teens and teenagers to too early in their electronic lives. They need to have social skills before the social media turns them into media skills.

Over time the use of social media has increased with the growing popularity of the sites. From 2005 to 2014 the number of online adult using social media jumped from 25% to 74% (Social). Further breaking it down to age groups of 18-29, 30-49, 50-64 and 65+, the 18-29 age range has the most growth and use starting at 9% in 2005 and jumping to 89% by 2014 (Social). Notice how the age ranges do not go any lower than 18 years old. There is no data here to show how many 10-17 year olds are using social media sites and how much that has increased from 2005-2014. On Facebook you legally can not make an account until you are 13 years old but it has been shown that 7.5 million Facebook users are under 13 years old and 5 million of those 7.5 million are under 10 years old (Miller). There is a reason that you can not have a Facebook legally until you are 13 years old, yet 7.5 million kids found a way to make a Facebook page before their 13th birthday's.

With a rise in social media use has brought with it the development of cyberbullying. Cyberbullying is just like the old fashioned bullying on the playground except you can never leave the playground. The playground follows you everywhere and all the mean words and put downs are there all day long. Rebecca Ann Sedwick was a 12 year old girl who committed suicide after enduring cyberbullying from two girls. These girls that bullied her were 12 and 14. Two of the three girls involved in this tragedy were younger than 13, the legal age to have the social media sites that were used to bully Rebecca to death (Graber). This family is not alone. On January 27, 2016, 13-year-old Nicole Lovell went missing. She was later found to be stabbed to death by a 18-year-old Virginia Tech student (McLaughlin). It has been alleged that the 13 and 19-year-old met on Kik, a social media site that allows users to send anonymous messages to one another (McLaughlin). These two girl both lost their lives in connection to social media. Social media itself did not kill either of these girls but how they were used and the people that were using them did. This is not something that we should be letting anyone under the age of 13 or even raising the age to 15 or 16, on social media because of the negative consequences it can have on these people.

Social media has it benefits but it also has its downfalls. Its downfalls can be severe and could cost someone a job or even their life. This can be hard for adults and even harder for kids. Social media sites, as good as their benefits may be, they do not outweigh the safety of children. At the very least children need to be kept at only getting social media sites when they are 13. To be more beneficial to them, it should be raised to 15 or 16. Social media is a powerful tool and put in the wrong hands, or incapable hands can hurt more than it will ever help.

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